

Amendments to the Claims

What is claimed is:

Claim 1. (Currently amended): A gaming apparatus, comprising:

a primary game having a bonus feature; and

a bonus indicator separate from and non-identical to said primary game, said bonus indicator to be enabled by credit wagered in said primary game to operate substantially simultaneously with said primary game, to be of approximately the same duration as said primary game, and to indicate, independent of any outcome of the primary game, whether a player is entitled to said bonus feature.

Claim 2. (Original): The apparatus of claim 1, wherein said primary game contains a plurality of reels, each of which is capable of displaying symbols and wherein said primary game is won when a predetermined combination of symbols is achieved.

Claim 3. (Original): The apparatus of claim 1, wherein said bonus indicator is a roulette type wheel.

Claim 4. (Original): The apparatus of claim 1, wherein said bonus indicator is one or more reels.

Claim 5. (Original): The apparatus of claim 1, wherein said primary game contains a plurality of reels, each of which is capable of displaying symbols, wherein said primary game is won when a predetermined combination of symbols is achieved, and wherein said bonus indicator is a roulette type wheel.

Claim 6. (Original): The apparatus of claim 1, wherein said primary game contains a plurality of reels, each of which is capable of displaying symbols, wherein said primary game is

won when a predetermined combination of symbols is achieved, and wherein said bonus indicator is one or more reels.

Claim 7. (Original): The apparatus of claim 1, wherein said apparatus is connected to an overall casino management system which monitors and controls said apparatus.

Claim 8. (Original): The apparatus of claim 1, wherein said apparatus is linked to one or more other gaming apparatuses to create a bank of hyperlinked gaming apparatuses.

Claim 9. (Original): The apparatus of claim 1, wherein said bonus indicator is used to show participation in a tournament played across a linked group of gaming apparatuses.

Claims ~~10-21~~. (Cancelled):

Claim 22. (Currently amended): A method for playing a gaming machine ~~that includes a bonus indicator~~, comprising:

playing a primary game having a bonus feature; and

automatically initiating a separate bonus indicator when credit is wagered in said primary game, said bonus indicator to operate substantially simultaneously with and be non-identical to said primary game, to be of approximately the same duration as said primary game, and to indicate, independent of any outcome of the primary game, whether a player is entitled to said bonus feature.

Claim 23. (Original): The method of claim 22, wherein said primary game contains a plurality of reels, each of which is capable of displaying symbols and wherein said primary game is won when a predetermined combination of symbols is achieved.

Claim 24. (Original): The method of claim 22, wherein said bonus indicator is a roulette type wheel.

Claim 25. (Original): The method of claim 22, wherein said bonus indicator is one or more reels.

Claim 26. (Original): The method of claim 22, wherein said primary game contains a plurality of reels, each of which is capable of displaying symbols, wherein said primary game is won when a predetermined combination of symbols is achieved, and wherein said bonus indicator is a roulette type wheel.

Claim 27. (Original): The method of claim 22, wherein said primary game contains a plurality of reels, each of which is capable of displaying symbols, wherein said primary game is won when a predetermined combination of symbols is achieved, and wherein said bonus indicator is one or more reels.

Claim 28. (Original): The method of claim 22, wherein said gaming machine is connected to an overall casino management system which monitors and controls said gaming machine.

Claim 29. (Original): The method of claim 22, wherein said gaming machine is linked to one or more other gaming machines to create a bank of hyperlinked gaming machines.

Claim 30. (Original): The method of claim 22, wherein said bonus indicator is used to show participation in a tournament played across a linked group of gaming machines.

Claim 31. (Cancelled):

Claim 32. (Currently amended): A method for playing a gaming machine ~~that includes a bonus indicator~~, comprising:

playing a primary game; and automatically enabling and initiating a separate bonus indicator when credit is wagered in said primary game, said bonus indicator to operate simultaneously with and be non-identical to said primary game, to be of approximately the same

duration as said primary game, and to indicate, independent of any outcome of the primary game, whether a player is entitled to a bonus feature to said primary game.

Claim 33. (Currently amended): The method of claim 32, wherein said bonus feature provides the player with the opportunity to win a prize, promotional item or message from a casino.

Claim 34. (Original): The method of claim 32, wherein said primary game contains a plurality of reels, each of which is capable of displaying symbols and wherein said primary game is won when a predetermined combination of symbols is achieved.

Claim 35. (Original): The method of claim 32, wherein said bonus indicator is a roulette type wheel.

Claim 36. (Original): The method of claim 32, wherein said bonus indicator is one or more reels.

Claim 37. (Original): The method of claim 32, wherein said primary game contains a plurality of reels, each of which is capable of displaying symbols, wherein said primary game is won when a predetermined combination of symbols is achieved, and wherein said bonus indicator is a roulette type wheel.

Claim 38. (Original): The method of claim 32, wherein said primary game contains a plurality of reels, each of which is capable of displaying symbols, wherein said primary game is won when a predetermined combination of symbols is achieved, and wherein said bonus indicator is one or more reels.

Claim 39. (Original): The method of claim 32, wherein said gaming machine is connected to an overall casino management system which monitors and controls said gaming machine.

Claim 40. (Original): The method of claim 32, wherein said gaming machine is linked to one or more other gaming machines to create a bank of hyperlinked gaming machines.

Claim 41. (Original): The method of claim 32, wherein said bonus indicator is used to show participation in a tournament played across a linked group of gaming machines.

Claim 42-48. (Cancelled):

Claim 49. (Currently amended): A gaming device comprising:

a computer configured to present a primary game outcome and to substantially simultaneously present a bonus game-indicator to a player, said bonus indicator being enabled by credit wagered in said primary game and designating, independent of any outcome of the primary game, at least one of a bonus condition or non-bonus condition; and

means for initiating a bonus feature for said primary game where said bonus indicator designates a bonus condition.

Claim 50. (~~Currently amended~~previously presented): The gaming device of claim 49 comprising said computer configured to display a second game to the player for issuing a bonus to the player where said bonus indicator designates a bonus condition.

Claim 51 (~~New~~Currently amended): A gaming apparatus, comprising:

a primary game having a bonus feature, said primary game configured to operate to produce at a display winning and losing primary game outcomes; and

a bonus indicator enabled by credit wagered in said primary game to operate substantially simultaneously with said primary game, said bonus indicator displayed separately from said primary game outcome display and randomly selected between enabling and not enabling said bonus feature independent of said primary game outcome.